

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 4141

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PGOV, JM, US
SUBJECT: JAMAICAN MEDIA WILL SUPPORT GOJ IN ATTEMPT TO MEET IMF
LOAN CONDITIONS

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 3945

1. SUMMARY: SUBJECT TO THEIR ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL
LIMITATIONS, THE JAMAICAN MEDIA AS A WHOLE CAN BE EXPECTED TO
PLAY A SUPPORTIVE ROLE AS THE GOJ MAKES THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
ADJUSTMENTS INVOLVED IN THE ATTEMPT TO MEET THE RECENTLY
ANNOUNCED IMF LOAN CONDITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SUPPORT OF THE JAMAICAN MEDIA WILL BE CRUCIAL TO THE
GOJ IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE PRESENT
SITUATION. THE GLEANER PUBLICATIONS WHICH, UP TO THE PRESENT,
HAVE PROVIDED THE FORUM FOR THE MOST SEVERE CRITICS OF THE
GOVERNMENT, ARE LIKELY TO TEMPER THEIR CRITICISM TO THE
EXTENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS SEEN TO BE SERIOUS IN ITS
COMMITMENT TO A MIXED ECONOMY AND AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT
ROLE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE RESCUE AND RECON-
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STRUCTION OF THE JAMAICAN ECONOMY.

3. THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA (RJR AND JBC RADIO AND TV) ARE
IN EFFECT UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S THUMB AND WILL, AFTER
A BRIEF PERIOD OF IDEOLOGICAL REORIENTATION, STRONGLY
SUPPORT THE GOJ INITIATIVES. THE PROBLEM HERE IS THAT
THESE MEDIA ARE THOSE IN WHICH "WORKER PARTICIPATION"

HAS REACHED THE EDITORIAL LEVEL TO THE GREATEST EXTENT AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE WILL HAVE TO EXERCISE HIS CONTROL IN A LESS INDIRECT FASHION THEN IN THE RECENT PAST. AS AN INDICATION OF SUCH AN INTENTION, A PARTICULARLY VITRIOLIC ANTI-IMF "GUEST COMMENTARY" WAS KILLED BY THE GENERAL MANAGER OF JBC DURING THE WEEK PRIOR TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AGREEMENT WITH THE IMF. NOT PARTICULARLY NOTED FOR THE STIFFNESS OF HIS SPINE, IT IS CLEAR THAT HIS DECISION HAD VERY HIGH LEVEL BACKING. THE FACT THAT THE ENTIRE JBC NEWS FORCE WALKED OFF THE JOB AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THAT DECISION (FOR ONE DAY) HELPS EXPLAIN THAT THE STRONGEST ARGUMENTS AGAINST ACCEPTING THE IMF TERMS WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE GOJ FROM THE LEFT-ORIENTED "GUEST COMMENTATORS" ON THE JBC ROLLS.

4. THE JAMAICA DAILY NEWS, UNDER A LEFT-WING EDITOR, IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT UPON GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR ITS CONTINUED, PRECARIOUS EXISTENCE. IT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT GOJ POLICIES, ALTHOUGH - LIKE JBC - IT HAS, IN THE RECENT PAST, PROVIDED A VENUE FOR CRITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE LEFT.

5. IN SUM, THE JAMAICAN MEDIA AS A WHOLE CAN BE EXPECTED TO PLAY A SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN THE READJUSTMENT PROCESS ALTHOUGH, FROM THE GLEANER PUBLICATIONS THAT SUPPORT WILL BE HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT ITS
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EDITORIALS AND COLUMNISTS WILL CONTINUE TO BE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF BUREAUCRATIC INADEQUACIES. THE QUALITY OF THAT SUPPORT HOWEVER WILL BE LIMITED BY THE SEVERE TECHNICAL INADEQUACIES OF JBC AND THE FURTHER ECONOMIC SQUEEZE ON THE PRINTED MEDIA BECAUSE OF THE RAPID INCREASE IN THE COST OF NEWSPRINT (ESTIMATED AT 30 PERCENT) AND DECLINING ADVERTISING REVENUES.
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